



7555-01-P

## **NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION**

### **Agency Information Collection Activities: Comment Request; Awardee Reporting Requirements for the Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) Research Infrastructure Improvement Programs**

**AGENCY:** National Science Foundation.

**ACTION:** Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request.

**SUMMARY:** The National Science Foundation (NSF) has submitted the following information collection requirement to OMB for review and clearance under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. This is the **second notice** for public comment; the first was published in the FEDERAL REGISTER, and no comments were received. NSF is forwarding the proposed submission to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance simultaneously with the publication of this second notice.

**DATES:** Written comments and recommendations for the proposed information collection should be sent within 30 days of publication of this notice to [www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain](https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain). Find this particular information collection by selecting "Currently under 30-day Review – Open for Public Comments" or by using the search function.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Suzanne H. Plimpton, Reports Clearance Officer, National Science Foundation, 2415 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22314, or send email to [splimpto@nsf.gov](mailto:splimpto@nsf.gov).

Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339, which is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year (including federal holidays).

Copies of the submission may be obtained by calling 703-292-7556.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NSF may not conduct or sponsor a collection of information unless the collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number and the agency informs potential persons who are to respond to the collection of information that such persons are not required to respond to the collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Title of Collection:** Awardee Reporting Requirements for the Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) Research Infrastructure Improvement Programs

**OMB Number:** 3145-0243.

**Type of Request:** Reinstatement with change of an established information collection.

**Proposed Project:** The mission of the National Science Foundation (NSF) is to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, welfare, and prosperity; and to secure the national defense, while avoiding the undue concentration of research and education. In 1977, in response to congressional concern that NSF funding was overly concentrated geographically, a National Science Board task force analyzed the geographic distribution of NSF funds, which resulted in the creation of an NSF Experimental Program to Stimulate

Competitive Research (EPSCoR). The American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (Public Law 114-329, Sec 103 D) effectively changed the program's name from "Experimental" to "Established" in FY 2016. Congress specified two objectives for the EPSCoR program in the National Science Foundation Authorization Act of 1988: (1) to assist States that historically have received relatively little Federal research and development funding; and (2) to assist States that have demonstrated a commitment to develop their research bases and improve science and engineering research and education programs at their universities and colleges

The EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) Investment Strategies advance science and engineering capabilities in EPSCoR jurisdictions for discovery, innovation and overall knowledge-based prosperity. These projects build human, cyber, and physical infrastructure in EPSCoR jurisdictions, stimulating sustainable improvements in their Research & Development (R&D) capacity and competitiveness.

EPSCoR projects are unique in their scope and complexity; in their integration of individual researchers, institutions, and organizations; and in their role in developing the diverse, well-prepared, STEM-enabled workforce necessary to sustain research competitiveness and catalyze economic development. In addition, these projects are generally inter- or multi-disciplinary and involve effective jurisdictional and regional collaborations among academic, government, and private sector stakeholders that advance scientific research,

promote innovation, and provide multiple societal benefits. They also broaden participation in science and engineering by engaging multiple institutions and organizations at all levels of research and education, and people within and among EPSCoR jurisdictions. These projects usually involve between 100 to 300 participants per year over the performance period, and the projects reach thousands more through their extensive STEM outreach activities. The American Innovation and Competitiveness Act of 2016, Section 103 (Public Law 114-329) requires NSF EPSCoR to submit annual reports to both Congress and OSTP that contain data detailing project progress and success (new investigators, broadening participation, dissemination of results, new workshops, outreach activities, proposals submitted and awarded, mentoring activities among faculty members, collaborations, researcher participating on the review process, etc.).

EPSCoR RII Track-1, Track-2, and Track-4 projects are required to submit annual reports on progress and plans, which are used as a basis for performance review and determining the level of continued funding. To support this review and the management of EPSCoR RII projects, teams are required to develop a set of performance indicators for building sustainable infrastructure and capacity in terms of a strategic plan for the project; measure performance and revise strategies as appropriate; report on the progress relative to the project's goals and milestones; and describe changes in strategies, if any, for submission annually to NSF. These indicators are both quantitative and descriptive and may include, for example, the characteristics of project personnel and students; aggregate demographics of participants; sources of financial support and in-kind

support; expenditures by operational component; characteristics of industrial and/or other sector participation; research activities; workforce development activities; external engagement activities; patents and patent licenses; publications; degrees granted to students involved in project activities; and descriptions of significant advances and other outcomes of the EPSCoR project's efforts. Part of this reporting takes the form of several spreadsheets to capture specific information to demonstrate progress towards achieving the goals of the program. Such reporting requirements are included in the cooperative agreement which is binding between the awardee institution and NSF.

Each project's annual report addresses the following categories of activities: (1) research, (2) education, (3) workforce development, (4) partnerships and collaborations, (5) communication and dissemination, (6) sustainability, (7) diversity, (8) management, and (9) evaluation and assessment.

For each of the categories the report is required to describe overall objectives for the year; specific accomplishments, impacts, outputs and outcomes; problems or challenges the project has encountered in making progress towards goals; and anticipated problems in performance during the following year.

**Use of the Information:** NSF will use the information to continue its oversight of funded EPSCoR RII projects, and to evaluate the progress of the program.

The change would facilitate reporting better aligned with program goals and provides data as legislatively required for NSF EPSCoR.

**Estimate of Burden:** Approximately 59 hours per project for 173 projects for a total of 7555 hours.

**Respondents:** Non-profit institutions; federal government.

**Estimated Number of Responses per Report:** One.

Dated: October 16, 2020.

**Suzanne H. Plimpton,**  
*Reports Clearance Officer,*  
*National Science Foundation.*

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